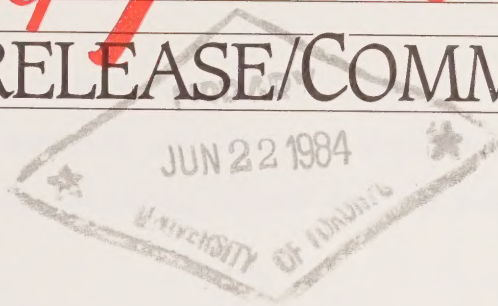


Youth/Jeunesse

NEWS RELEASE/COMMUNIQUE

84-17



(Ottawa, June 7, 1984) - Céline Hervieux-Payette, Minister of State for Youth, tabled in the House of Commons today a lengthy report containing an analysis of the situation of the young people in Canada.

The report, entitled "Focus on Youth", contains a profile of Canada's young people, a new perspective on the current situation facing them and an outline of the measures now in place to assist them. The report includes the views expressed by young people themselves, by organizations concerned with them, by unions and by employers. It also covers experiences in other countries.

In presenting the document, which is an outcome of the meetings she had across the country, Mme Hervieux-Payette said that "the report should be seen as a guide in seeking common solutions and the development of a comprehensive youth policy in Canada."

Mme Hervieux-Payette also specified that the report will be the point of departure for official consultations with youth and all socio-economic partners.

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The report suggests six basic themes that should be addressed in the process of developing a youth policy for the Government of Canada:

- government programs should emphasize the generation of work, meaningful activity and positive attachments to major social institutions, including school and the workplace, for all young people;
- government programs directed to young people of all ages and educational levels should emphasize learning and human resource development, with a view to equipping young people with the means of living in a changing society and of meeting the skill needs of the economy;
- the role of government income support and other social programs should be examined to ensure that they are appropriate to the needs of the most disadvantaged and that they operate in a fair and equitable way;
- means must be found to ensure that the voice of youth is given appropriate weight in wider decision-making relating to the economic, social and cultural policies;
- the programs and policies of the government should encourage and support active youth programs by the provinces, industry, labour, educators and organizations working for youth;
- government programs should support a sense of excellence and innovation among young people and a sense of contributing to broader social goals and of belonging to and participating in the main institutions of our society.

An accompanying document, entitled "A New Statistical Perspective on Youth in Canada", was produced with the "Focus on Youth" report. Both are available from:

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- 30 -

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BACKGROUNDER

Purposes of the Report

This report has three purposes. First, it presents an analysis of the socio-economic position of youth in Canada. Second, it presents the points of view and suggestions raised during the first phase of private consultations undertaken by the Minister of State (Youth). Finally, it puts forward an agenda for further consultation and action.

Overview of the Youth Situation

From a detailed analysis of the situation of youth in Canada, the following highlights emerged:

- two of life's greatest transitions are usually made during the ages of 15 to 24 - from school to work and from dependence on parents to independence, often with a new family of one's own;
- these two transitions to adulthood are periods of difficulty, opportunity and challenge for young people. The difficulties and the challenges are especially critical in an age when society as a whole is itself in a period of fundamental transition. This is the present situation as technology is changing the nature of work. And the difficulties are further compounded in a time like the present of high cyclical unemployment;
- the transition from dependence to independence is marked by a continuing preference for most young people to live in traditional family settings. The study found a surprisingly large and growing number of young people in their 20s, both students and those in the labour force, who were continuing to live with their parents;
- the study found that improvements were needed in the transition from school to work for all youth groups. The lack of meaningful activity has reached significant proportions. In an average week in 1983, over 800 000 young people who had left school lacked meaningful activity. Over 40% of all out-of-school young people (including those who had been out of school for some years) were unemployed for part of the year. Less than half of those who were employed worked full-time all year;
- those faced with a prolonged period without meaningful activity and attachment to social institutions tend to live in an atmosphere of uncertainty and stress. Suicide rates are high. Many of the institutions of society are held in low esteem. On the other hand, in physical terms, most young Canadians are well off. They are healthy and most live in families with reasonable incomes;
- a minority of young people, smaller in Canada than in many other countries, suffer real economic hardship. Some 14% of young Canadians lived in families below the poverty line. While there is no simple relationship between the educational and work activity of young people and their income, hardship

tends to be most severe for young people who are unemployed, who have left the parental home and who have low educational attainment;

- even in better economic times, an important minority of young people, often those who left secondary school without needed labour market skills, tend to suffer chronic unemployment. The recession has had a particularly harsh impact on this group;
- a wealth of never-before published data is presented in the report and in a separate statistical profile. A range of basic statistics is presented which, for the first time, allows a clear distinction to be made between the activities and characteristics of students and of those young people who have left school.

Existing Role of Governments

There are many government programs and services devoted to the transition from school to work and to the provision of meaningful activity for young people. Some of these are described as are the social security measures that society provides when there are failures in both the transition to work and the transition from dependence to independence. These include unemployment insurance and social assistance.

Minister's Consultations

During initial meetings with interested groups, participants outlined their views on the youth situation. Most of the concern centered around the problems of the transition from school to work in a time of high unemployment and of longer-term uncertainties about the place of young people in the workplace. Providing activity that was meaningful to both young people and society was seen as the main challenge.

Youth identified their main needs as:

- better opportunities to contribute to society and to their own betterment through meaningful, fulfilling work;
- an education system better adapted to their needs as individuals and workers;
- an identity as valuable members of society by being given more responsibility but also by being held accountable for their decisions;
- more access to institutions and decision-making processes affecting them;
- the opportunity to use International Youth Year to develop a positive image and try out new ideas and approaches.

Youth-serving organizations indicated youth needs would best be met through:

- a coordinated approach to meet the very different requirements of segments within the youth population;
- fuller participation in social institutions and activities to overcome youth alienation.

Representatives of labour put forward two perspectives:

- Canadians need to redefine work, what it means to contribute to society and our methods of re-distributing wealth;
- a dilemma for the trade union movement is how to assist young workers to enter the labour market, as well as protect those who have worked all their lives, from being displaced by changes in technology.

Representatives of business identified a problem and a challenge:

- improvement in the youth situation is intimately related to economic recovery. Present economic conditions work heavily against the hiring of young people who lack skills or preparation for the labour market. Yet society, including business, has a responsibility to these young people;
- high technology and increasing international competition make it essential to be flexible and competitive. Young people must be provided with the skills and work orientations that are needed to fully contribute to a changing economy.

All participants in the preliminary meetings further elaborated on these views by suggesting a wide range of constructive and often innovative ideas for action. Most frequently, the suggestions touched on the areas of employment, education and social participation.

Experiences of Other Countries

Examples of experiences of other countries in integrating their youth into working life were examined. Many countries sharing the same high youth unemployment levels that we are experiencing use approaches quite different from ours. This suggests further study to see if some of them may usefully be applied to the Canadian context.

Synthesis and Themes

Based on an analysis of the youth situation and of the need for a new public policy related to youth, a number of basic themes emerged that should be addressed in the future development of a youth policy for the Government of Canada.

- government programs should emphasize the generation of work, meaningful activity and positive attachments to major social institutions, including school and the work-place, for **all** young people. There should be an immediate emphasis on those most badly hit by the recession, often those who left school at the secondary level without being provided with the skills being demanded by the labour market;
- government programs directed to young people of all ages and educational levels should emphasize learning and human resource development, with a view to equipping young people with the means of living in a changing society and of meeting the skill needs of the economy.
- the role of government income support and other social programs should be examined to ensure that they are appropriate to the needs of the most disadvantaged and that they operate in a fair and equitable way, taking into account the quite different conditions of those youth who are independent. The special needs of young Canadians who have started raising families of their own must be recognized;
- means must be found to ensure that the voice of youth is given appropriate weight in wider decision making related to the economic, social and cultural policies;
- the programs and policies of the government should encourage and support active youth programs by the provinces, industry, labour, educators and organizations working for youth;
- government programs should support a sense of excellence and innovation among young people and a sense of contributing to broader social and cultural goals and of belonging to and participating in the main institutions of our society.

Agenda for Consultation and Action

Following is a list of topics that could be covered in official consultations to take place in the coming months. They arise from the analysis undertaken in the report and from suggestions made in the initial private consultations.

General Issues

- Do the six basic themes listed above provide a good basis for a longer-term youth policy for the Government of Canada?

Generation of Meaningful Activity

- How can a youth perspective be given appropriate weight in determining general economic and social policies? Are new structures of consultation needed?

- What are the best approaches to sharing existing work? Where would payoffs for young people be highest? Examples include voluntary early retirement and more voluntary part-time work.
- What new arrangements should be considered for providing young people with the practical training and private sector work experience they need? Some possible examples are given.
- What scope exists for the expansion of voluntary services as a meaningful alternative to paid work?
- What about community service?
- To what extent should governments continue to rely on traditional counter-cyclical job creation programs?
- What role should entrepreneurship and collective initiatives play in a longer-term youth strategy?

Skills and Human Resource Development

- How should skill development be dealt with in the context of the impact of technological change on youth?
- Is the range and balance of arrangements for mixing school with work appropriate? Are new programs or coordinating mechanisms required? Examples of such arrangements are given.
- Is society spending enough on education in total or is the problem one of improving the relevance and flexibility of existing spending? Is staying in school longer a good investment?
- What scope exists for the expansion of private sector exchanges of young people to different parts of the country or between countries?

Social Programs and Equity

- Is the level of support adequate for youth under existing income security programs? Is there a need for more formal mechanisms of coordination among these programs?
- The issues of equity and fairness in different programs need examination in light of wide differences in existing approaches.
- The special requirements of young Canadians who are themselves starting to raise families of their own need examination.

Making the Voice of Youth Heard

- A range of economic, social and cultural programs has special relevance for young Canadians. How can we ensure that they are designed to meet the needs and aspirations of young people?

Sharing of Responsibilities

- How urgent are the problems of youth compared with other economic and social problems? How much money should society and governments devote to a youth policy?
- How can the short-term interests of youth be reconciled with those of business and labour? How can labour, business and governments more effectively carry out their responsibilities toward youth?
- What are the priorities for the collection and analysis of new data on the situation of youth? How could such data be gathered?

Belonging and Excellence

- What methods are available to strengthen the ties between young people and our social and cultural institutions so as to increase the sense of purpose and reduce alienation among youth?
- What new approaches can be explored to promote a sense of excellence and contribution to important social goals among young people?